

Applicants note with appreciation that claims 1-20, 22-25 and 27-31 (*sic* 1-7, 9, 10, 12-20, 22, 24, 25 and 27-31) (claims 8, 11, 21 and 23 have been cancelled) have been indicated as containing allowable subject and would be allowed if rewritten or amended to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, below.

Claims 16-20, 22 and 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Specifically, the Examiner contends that there is no antecedent basis for the recitation “said static bearing” in line 5 of claim 16. This rejection is respectfully traversed. Applicants earnestly believe that this rejection is in error inasmuch as the noted phrase “said static bearing” does not appear in line 5 of claim 16. Accordingly, Applicants request that this rejection be reconsidered and be withdrawn.

Claims 1-20, 22-25 and 27-31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph. The Examiner asserted that the specification, while being enabling for substituting nitrogen and helium in an X-ray lithography exposure chamber, does not reasonably provide enablement for any gases in any environment as claimed. The Examiner further suggests that the claims be limited to X-ray lithography. This rejection, and the Examiner’s contentions, are respectfully traversed.

As noted by the Examiner, the subject specification on page 8, lines 1-10, discusses that the invention is directed to X-ray lithography. In addition, however, page 8, lines 10-12, of the subject specification, further discuss that the exposure apparatus (of the present invention) may be an exposure apparatus employing an F<sub>2</sub> laser beam as an exposure beam. Based on this discussion, Applicants believe that one having ordinary skill in the art would readily understand

that the present invention is not, in fact, limited to X-ray lithography, as suggested by the Examiner.

Still further, the subject specification discusses an example in which a first gas can be, for example, nitrogen or air (for example, dry air) and a second gas can be, for example, helium. By way of example, if an exposure apparatus is an exposure apparatus employing an F<sub>2</sub> laser beam as an exposure beam, Applicants submit that one having ordinary skill in the art would readily understand that the first gas could be dry air and the second gas could be nitrogen, in order to implement the present invention. On this point, Applicants submit that one having ordinary skill in the art would readily understand that different kinds of gases (especially, for the second gas) can be utilized based on the various types of light sources used in, for example, an exposure apparatus implementing the present invention. Applicants submit, therefore, that for these reasons as well, the present invention should not be limited to X-ray lithography, as suggested by the Examiner.

Applicants further note the Examiner's comments that the amendments to claims 1 and 9, as presented in the Amendment filed on September 10, 2004, are "superficial" and Applicant has made no substantive effort to place this application in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's contentions, inasmuch as they earnestly believe that the pending claims are in allowable form, and the subject application is in condition for allowance.

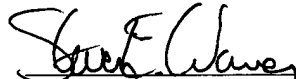
Since no art has been applied against the pending claims, and the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first and second paragraphs, have been overcome (for the reasons set forth above), Applicants submit that the present invention, as recited in independent claims 1, 9, 12, 14, 16, 24 and 30, is patentably defined.

Dependent 2-7, 10, 13, 15, 17-20, 22, 25, 27-29 and 31 should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in their respective independent claims. Further individual consideration of these dependent claims is requested.

Applicants further submit that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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